

Coins

Surplus mint sets: Three coins in the mountain

By Roger Boye

Q—FOR THE BICENTENNIAL, Congress requested that the United States Mint make 15 million silver-clad proof and uncirculated sets of three coins each [quarters, half-dollar, and dollar]. Subsequently, the mint felt the number was too high and there would be a surplus. Will Congress reduce the number, and if so, by how much?—R. M., Valparaiso, Ind.

A—The mint may be unable to sell 15 million of the three-coin Bicentennial sets. Thus, it seems likely that Congress will reduce the number it had mandated be made. However, Congress has yet to act, and it is not definite how much the reduction would be.

If the number is reduced, the three-coin sets will not become "rare." The mint already has orders for more than 3 million Bicentennial

proof sets and 4 million uncirculated sets. By past standards, that's a lot of sets.

Q—What is meant by the "regular" and "star" issues to make a complete collection of the new \$2 bills? I understand that 12 of each are needed. What do you look for?—A. S., Crawfordsville, Ind.

A—Some persons collect the 1976 \$2 bills by saving one bill from each of the 12 Federal Reserve banks [the particular bank is identified on the bill]. In addition, some persons also try to find 12 bills [one from each bank] that have stars at the end of the serial number.

The stars [or asterisks] are not "printing errors," but result from printing errors. Regular numbered and lettered bills, spoiled in the printing process, are destroyed at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The bureau replaces those destroyed notes with an equal number of

notes bearing a star in the serial number.

Star notes are used by the bureau because it would be costly and difficult to replace each destroyed note with a bill bearing an identical serial number.

Although star notes are less common than notes without stars, star notes are not "rare."

Q—Coin books talk about the "mound" and "recessed" varieties of the 1913 buffalo nickel. What am I supposed to look for on my coin?—I. M., Willow Springs.

A—On some 1913 nickels, the buffalo is standing on a mound and the words "five cents" [below the buffalo] appear to be away from the rim. On others [recessed] the buffalo appears to be standing on a straight thin line, and the words "five cents" are close to the rim [the letter "f" touches the rim].